

Feb. 3, 1945

Belgium

Fletchie dear,

I have been spending a very pleasant Saturday afternoon with you, reading over your December letters, and listening to the concert on the BBC.

* * * * *

One of the empty feelings one gets is that of being let down by your own side. Over here we have many times had that feeling about certain things going on at home. More recently, we have undergone the same feeling, but this time due to activities on the part of a few people in our army over here. The spectacle of our soldiers, though it be relatively few, hiding out in the cities, profiteering at the expense of the front-line G.I.'s, running whore houses, etc. makes everyone else fighting mad. Though the sentences have been stiff, few if any of the soldiers I've talked to think they were unwarranted. The damage to our prestige and friendly relations with these countries is not inconsiderable. It would seem that in every crowd there are some guys who get to thinking so hard about how they can make a little personal profit that they lose sight of the bigger picture. In the end, they don't gain, and everyone loses.

Your comment on the size of the communist groups in the various countries is interesting. It would appear that they are indeed considerable. Of them, I think, these things are true. First, in almost every instance they played leading roles in the underground resistance against the Germans. Their work was brave and valuable. How much their inner organization was influenced or inspired by Moscow no one knows. Their weapons were largely supplied by the British and by Us. They fought primarily as patriots, not as party agents. Secondly, the growth and development of these groups during the war suggests the presence of pre-existing conditions in these countries fostering the emergence of these groups. I suspect it is part and parcel of the world wide social revolution which we see in all countries now. In England, wide spread social security, building programs, slum clearance, health programs, etc. In America, social security, new dealism, health socialism, job insurance, trade unionism, etc. Notice how few, if any, of the Governments in power at the start of the war and now in exile (almost all conservative to reactionary) represent the feelings of the people now. There are thousands of people who wanted to fight for their country's liberation; but not to return, when it was over, to their former economic and political servitude. These people assembled in militant leftist groups, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, and France -- not one of their prewar governments are now representative. The situation is even worse with Poland. We have seen the fear of the

Page 2 - letter dated Feb. 3, 1945

left groups in Greece to let loose their arms. They feared actual physical violence at the hands of the monarchist rights. And thus England (and we) find ourselves in the dilemma of having to back a government which, far from representing its people, is actually odious to a good part of them. Is this "self-determination?" Is this the "four freedoms?" That British soldiers should be killing the very men who fought the Germans the hardest. Why we did not insist that hostilities cease at once, a joint English, American, French & Russian commission go in, and supervise an election, I do not know. Instead, we have a situation with Britain playing power politics (none too happily I suspect) and our "war aims" starting out to a bad beginning. Yugoslavia has gone better, but there it was more recognition of a fait accompli than by design. If these communist groups are large, I think, it is because of the existence of this wide-spread revolt against the former status quo. If we are sincere in our alleged "aims" we must recognize these groups and what they stand for. If we create conditions whereby liberal democracy can arise in these countries we have nothing to fear from these groups--they will receive their relative importance in their country's affairs. But if we are fighting to preserve reactionary governments, property rights, economic cartels, feudal landowners, etc., I suspect we can expect to see further violence and perhaps actual communism in some or many of these countries.

* * * * *

G'nite dearest -

H